

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5446

As of February 14, 2005

Title: An act relating to licensing of soil scientists.

Brief Description: Licensing soil scientists.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Franklin, Swecker, Brown and Schoesler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 2/10/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Staff: John Dziedzic (786-7784)

Background: Soil science deals with the physical, chemical, and biological properties of the unconsolidated mineral and/or organic material on the surface of the earth. Soil science includes hydrological, erosion, and flood assessments, and other evaluations of the natural capacity of the soil to treat or dispose of water or waste products. Soil science is distinguished from soil engineering, which relates to evaluating soils as a support base for roads and buildings.

Summary of Bill: Practicing or offering to practice soil science for others without a license issued under this bill is unlawful. An application, examination, and licensing system similar to that which currently applies to geologists is created within the Department of Licensing (DOL). A five-member advisory committee, appointed by the Director of DOL, is created.

Before July 1, 2006, a person who is certified as a professional soil scientist or soil classifier by the Soil Science Society of America may be licensed without examination. After July 1, 2006, an applicant must have graduated from a course of study acceptable to the geologist licensing board, and demonstrate satisfactory character and experience.

All fees and fines received under this bill are deposited to the geologists' account. Licensing and disciplinary procedures are subject to the Uniform Regulation of Business and Professions Act. DOL may adopt rules under the Administrative Procedures Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.

Testimony For: Soil scientists play a vital role in several public health arenas; from training septic system designers and installers, to oil spill clean-up. Regulation of this highly specialized field is part of nation-wide trend of recognizing distinct but related disciplines, so

as to better match areas of expertise with the unique demands of public entities and private citizens.

Testimony Against: The bill appears to include agronomists and crop scientists, and possibly other related profession that are either currently licensed or that do not need or want to be licensed.

Who Testified: PRO: Lisa Palazzi, Pacific Rim Soil & Water; Michelle Miller, Toby Rodgers, WA Society of Professional Soil Scientists (WSPSS); A. J. Bredberg, B&A, Inc.; Darlene Zabowski, NW Forest Soils Council & WSPSS.

CON: Dan Coyne, Far West Agribusiness Assn.; Cliff Webster, Architects & Engineers Legislative Council.

OTHER: Mark Molinari, Assn. of Engineering Geologists.